

Navigating Sexual Identity, Bicultural Identity as a Result of Immigration

Jessie Andre PhD, L.MSW, MEd

Our Lady of the Lake University

ABSTRACT

In the past 10 years, more studies have begun exploring the psychological impact of those who have been subjected to and have adopted two different cultures. Currently, there is no existing literature regarding how individuals with a bicultural identity navigate their often-conflicting cultures on topics such as sexual pleasure and sexual scripts. The purpose of this study was to explore how first-generation Afro/Black Caribbean-American women navigate their multiple cultural identities with regards to sexual pleasure and sexual scripts. This study contains an exploration of participants self-described challenges, attitudes, and beliefs associated to how they navigate and experience their sexuality. This research study uses an explanatory, qualitative method design with semi structured interviews to answer the primary and secondary research question. Research findings indicate that the later the age of immigration, the stronger their ties were to the culture from their country of origin, which affected their self-assessments of sexual desirability and sexual self-esteem. Findings also suggest that even though women who immigrated at a younger age had higher rates of difficulty navigating and identifying with their adopted culture's sexual mores. These women also reported lower ratings of comfort voicing sexual desires and concerns to their partner and had lower self-ratings of feeling connected to their cultural identity. These participants had challenges utilizing the dual and conflicting sexual mores and rules they received from U.S. society and their country of origin resulting in less pleasurable sexual experiences. Whereas women who immigrated at an older age reported having more pleasurable sexual experiences.

Keywords: bicultural identity; cultural identity; immigration; sexual identity; sexual pleasure